

## Message Text

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TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 257193

NODIS

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FOR UNDER SECRETARY SISCO ONLY

FOL RPT DAMASCUS 4247 SENT ACTION SECSTATE OCT 30 QTE

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4247

NODIS/CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, SY, US, IS

SUBJECT: PROPOSED SHIHABI VISIT TO WASHINGTON

REF: A. STATE 254912; B. DAMASCUS 4204

1. SUMMARY: SHIHABI UNEXPECTEDLY INTRIGUED BY IDEA OF COMING TO WASHINGTON, IS TO CHECK IT OUT WITH ASAD AND LET US KNOW DECISION BY WEEKEND.

END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER LAST NIGHT'S REVIEW WITH SHIHABI OF REPORTED FEDAYEEN ATTACK ON GOLAN HEIGHTS (DAMASCUS 4230), DISCUSSED LEBANESE

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SITUATION INCLUDING GALLAGHER-DYKES KIDNAPPING (SEPTELS). THEN

MOVED TO PROSPECT OF GENERAL'S VISITING WASHINGTON.

3. SAID THAT HIS QUESTIONS TO ME OF LAST WEEK ABOUT DIRECTION

OF US MIDDLE EAST PLANNING HAD STIMULATED SUGGESTION IN WASHINGTON THAT HE COME OVER TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITIES AS WE SAW THEM. SHIHABI INTERJECTED, "BUT WHAT WOULD MY GOING ACCOMPLISH?" REPLIED IT WOULD GIVE CHANCE TO EXPLORE TOGETHER RANGE OF POSSIBLE FURTHER MOVES IN NEGOTIATIONS. NOTED THAT PRESIDENT ASAD HAD COGENTLY EXPLAINED REASONS HE COULD NOT MEET WITH PRESIDENT FORD. HOWEVER, A CAREFUL JOINT REVIEW BY SYRIAN AND US OF NEGOTIATING OPTIONS REMAINED HIGHLY DESIRABLE. SHIHABI OBSERVED THAT IF ANY MEETING WERE TO TAKE PLACE BELOW PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL, THEN WAS NOT KHADDAM THE LOGICAL REPRESENTATIVE? I SAID BASICALLY IT WAS THE GENERAL'S OWN QUESTION WHICH HAD INDICATED SYRIAN INTEREST IN CARRYING ON THE DIALOGUE. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, SAID ONE ADVANTAGE OF HIS GOING WOULD BE POSSIBILITY OF CARRYING OUT THIS CONTACT IN LOWER KEY THAN IF FONMIN WERE TO GO.

4. SHIHABI COUNTERED THAT SYRIAN VIEWS GOVERNING ANY FUTURE MOVES IN NEGOTIATIONS WERE PERFECTLY CLEAR. I AGREED THEY WERE CLEAR AS FAR AS THEY WENT BUT SUGGESTED THAT THEY WERE NOT PER SE CLEAR ENOUGH TO MOVE SITUATION FORWARD. THERE WAS MUCH COMMON GROUND IN SYRIAN AND AMERICAN POSITIONS BUT WE WERE PRESENTLY AT CROSS PURPOSES OVER TACTICS. TO SPEAK FRANKLY, I FELT SYRIA HAD BEEN PERHAPS TOO PASSIVE AND GENERAL IN PRESENTING ITS OWN IDEAS ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS DURING THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS IN OUR DIALOGUE. RECALLED THAT WHEN SECRETARY AS LONG AGO AS LAST FEBRUARY HAD ASKED PRESIDENT'S VIEWS RE WHAT SYRIA WAS THINKING OF IN TERMS OF A GOLAN STEP, ASAD HAD LIMITED HIMSELF TO RESPONSE IT WOULD SAVE TIME IF DR. KISSINGER WERE TO TELL HIM AMERICA'S IDEAS.

5. CONTINUED THAT IF WE DID NOT STAY IN CLOSE COMMUNICATION AT HIGH LEVEL THERE WAS RISK THAT AREA SITUATION WOULD FREEZE IN WAY WHICH WOULD BE CONTRARY TO BOTH OUR AND SYRIAN INTERESTS. WE UNDERSTOOD IT MIGHT BE DIFFICULT FOR SYRIANS AT THIS STAGE TO SEND SHIHABI. IF SO, I WOULD PROBABLY RETURN MYSELF TO WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK TO BE FULLY BRIEFED ON OUR LATEST

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THINKING. THEN I COULD RETURN TO DAMASCUS TO BEGIN DIALOGUE ABOUT OUR PLANNING. ADDED PARENTHETICALLY THAT IF HE IS UNABLE TO GO IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IF I COULD CARRY BACK SOME FRESH DETAILS OF SYRIA'S PRESENT THINKING ABOUT NEXT MOVES. EMPHASIZED IN CONCLUSION THAT MY GOING WOULD BE DISTINCTLY A SECOND BEST TO HIS GOING.

6. SHIHABI SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS OUR SUGGESTION WITH ASAD

AND LET ME KNOW DECISION BY THIS WEEKEND. HE ASKED WHAT DATE WE WOULD HAVE IN MIND FOR SUCH VISIT. REPLIED THAT IF I AM TO GO IT WILL BE NEXT WEEK BUT I WAS SURE IF HE IS ABLE TO MAKE TRIP WE COULD, IF NEED BE, DISCUSS ALTERNATE DATES. SHIHABI ADDED, "AND DISCUSS THE WAY I WOULD GO."

7. COMMENT: BY HIS LAST REMARK I UNDERSTOOD SHIHABI TO IMPLY THAT IF HE IS AUTHORIZED TO GO HE BELIEVED IT SHOULD BE UNDER CONDITIONS OF MAXIMUM ANONYMITY.

8. AFTER DRAFTING FOREGOING, I HAVE RECEIVED YOUR MESSAGE THAT I SHOULD SEE ASAD (STATE 257077). HAVE REQUESTED THAT MEETING. HAVE ONLY ONE QUESTION: IF ASAD AGREES SEND SHIHABI, DO YOU WANT ME BACK AS WELL?  
MURPHY  
UNQTE  
INGERSOLL

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